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Saab, VSATS and Leesburg Executive Airport Partner to Demonstrate & Evaluate Remote Tower Technology

Defense and security company Saab, the Virginia SATSLab, Inc. (VSATS) and the Leesburg Executive Airport (Leesburg, VA) are partnering to demonstrate and evaluate Saab remote tower technologies at Leesburg Executive Airport. During the summer of 2015, the partnership will demonstrate and evaluate the remote tower system for use at non-towered airports. The Virginia Department of Aviation is an advisory partner for the project.

For the demonstration, the partnership will deploy a number of Saab technologies at the airport -- high definition video cameras, pan-tilt-zoom (PTZ) camera, signal light gun (SLG) and microphones -- that will provide data directly to a Remote Tower Center (RTC) also located at the airport. The RTC will have multiple high-definition displays and two controller working positions with command of voice communications, the cameras and SLG. Data will be collected from the RTC, along with data from a Mobile Air Traffic Control Tower (MATCT) that will be deployed at the same time for safety redundancy and data comparison. FAA-certified Control Tower Operators will staff both the RTC and MATCT.

"VSATS is eager to partner with Saab and Leesburg to conduct the Remote Tower demonstration. We believe advancements in operational safety, efficiency and security at this uniquely located general aviation airport will be realized, and that valuable lessons for future deployment of the technology elsewhere in the National Airspace System will result," said Keith McCrea, VSATS Executive Director.

Leesburg Executive Airport is one of the top three ranked General Aviation (GA) airports in Virginia for both operations and based aircraft, but currently is not served by an air traffic control tower. The airport experiences a range of aircraft fleet operations within a complex terminal airspace, and is located under the veil of the Special Flight Rules Area (SFRA) for Washington, D.C., being located just five NM from the Washington Dulles International Airport. Pilots currently rely on CTAF to announce position within the Leesburg (JYO) traffic pattern.





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“Pilots will receive non-radar tower services from a trained FAA-certified controller, ensuring safe and efficient operations during the demonstration,” said Dennis B. Boykin IV, Chairman of the Leesburg Executive Airport Commission. “With the unanimous support of our Town Council, we’re excited for the opportunity to be ‘out in front’ by supporting this technology demonstration.”

Saab has pioneered the development of remote tower systems and technologies in cooperation with air traffic controllers and air navigation service providers (ANSPs). This has resulted in the recent achievement that the Swedish Transport Agency has given LFV, Sweden’s ANSP, clearance for their Remote Tower to be commissioned for Örnköldsvik Airport to be controlled from the Sundsvall Remote Tower Center. The company is deploying systems in Sweden, Norway and Australia.

“Leesburg presents the right conditions to demonstrate and evaluate remote tower technology for non-towered U.S. airports, potentially showing remote towers to be a safe, cost-effective alternative to building and maintaining an air traffic control tower,” said Ken Kaminski, general manager of Saab ATM.

The Virginia SATSLab, Inc. (VSATS) is a registered non-profit public-private corporation chartered in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Welcoming Gulfstreams and Cubs alike, Leesburg Executive Airport delivers comprehensive services without the congestion, expense and delays common to larger airports. Owned and operated by the Town of Leesburg, the Leesburg Executive Airport (JYO) is the second busiest General Aviation (GA) airport in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Located 35 miles from Washington DC, Leesburg Executive Airport is a designated reliever airport for Washington-Dulles International Airport.

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